

Characters

- FEFU
- CINDY
- CHRISTINA
- JULIA
- EMMA
- PAULA
- SUE
- CECILIA

New England, Spring 1935

Part I Noon. The living room. The entire audience watches from the auditorium.

Part II. Afternoon. The lawn, the study, the bedroom, the kitchen. The audience is divided into four groups. Each group is guided to the spaces. These scenes are performed simultaneously. When the scenes are completed the audience moves to the next space and the scenes are performed again. This is repeated four times until each group has seen all four scenes.

Part III. Evening. The living room. The entire audience watches from the auditorium.

Act 1

Part I

The living room of a country house in New England. The style is simple and although ample it resembles a farm house. To the left, French doors leading to a terrace, the lawn and a pond. To the rear right, two steps up is a landing that leads to the stairs to the upper floor. On the left of the landing there is an archway which is the entrance to other rooms in the main floor. A couch faces the audience. There is a coffee table, two small chairs on each side of the table. Upstage right there is a piano. Against the right wall there is a bar with a siphon. A double barrel shotgun leans near the French doors. On the table there is a dish with chocolates. On the sofa there is a silk shawl. FEFU stands on the landing. CINDY lies on the couch. CHRISTINA sits on the chair to the right.

FEFU

My husband married me to have a constant reminder of how loathsome women are.

CINDY

What?

FEFU

Yup.

CINDY

That's just awful.

FEFU

No it isn't.

CINDY

It isn't awful?

FEFU

No.

CINDY

I don't think anyone would marry for that reason.

FEFU

He did.

CINDY

Did he say so?

FEFU

He tells me constantly.

CINDY

Oh, dear.

FEFU

I don't mind. I laugh when he tells me.

CINDY

You laugh?

FEFU

I do.

CINDY

How can you?

FEFU

It's funny.--And it's true. That's why I laugh.

CINDY

What is true?

FEFU

That women are loathsome.

CINDY

... Fefu!

FEFU

That shocks you.

CINDY

It does. I don't feel loathsome.

FEFU

I don't mean that you are loathsome.

CINDY

You don't mean that I'm loathsome.

FEFU

No ... It's something to think about. It's a thought.

CINDY

It's a hideous thought.

FEFU

I take it all back.

CINDY

Isn't she incredible?

FEFU

Cindy, I'm not talking about anyone in particular. I'm talking about ...

CINDY

No one in particular, just women.

FEFU

Yes.

CINDY

In that case I am relieved. I thought you were referring to us.

(*They are amused. FEFU speaks affectionately.*)

FEFU

You are being stupid.

CINDY

Stupid and loathsome. (*To CHRISTINA.*) Have you ever heard anything more ...

CHRISTINA

(*Interrupting.*)

I am speechless.

(*Short pause.*)

FEFU

Why are you speechless?

CHRISTINA

I think you're outrageous.

FEFU

Don't be offended. I don't take enough care to be tactful. I know I don't. But don't be offended. Cindy is not offended. She pretends to be, but she isn't really. She understands what I mean.

CINDY

I do not.

FEFU

Yes, you do.--I like exciting ideas. They give me energy.

CHRISTINA

And how is women being loathsome an exciting idea?

FEFU

(*With mischief.*)

It revolts me.

CHRISTINA

You find revulsion exciting?

FEFU

Don't you?

CHRISTINA

No.

FEFU

I do. It's something to grapple with.--What do you do with revulsion?

CHRISTINA

I avoid anything that's revolting to me.

FEFU

Hmm.

(*To CINDY.*)

You too?

CINDY

Yes.

FEFU

Hmm. -Have you ever turned a stone over in damp soil?

CHRISTINA

Ahm.

FEFU

And when you turn it there are worms crawling on it?

CHRISTINA

Ahm.

FEFU

And it's damp and full of fungus?

CHRISTINA

Ahm.

FEFU

Were you revolted?

CHRISTINA

Yes.

FEFU

Were you fascinated?

CHRISTINA

I was.

FEFU

There you have it. You too are fascinated with revulsion.

CHRISTINA

Hmm.

FEFU

You see, that which is exposed to the exterior ... is smooth and dry and clean. That which is not ... underneath, is slimy and filled with fungus and crawling with worms. It is another life that is parallel to the one we manifest. It's there. The way worms are underneath the stone. If you don't recognize it ...

(*Whispering.*)

it eats you. -That is my opinion. -Well, who is ready for lunch?

CINDY

I'll have some fried worms with lots of pepper.

FEFU

(To CHRISTINA.)

You?

CHRISTINA

I'll have mine in a sandwich with mayonnaise.

FEFU

And to drink?

CHRISTINA

Just some dirty dishwater in a tall glass with ice.

(FEFU looks at CINDY.)

CINDY

That sounds fine.

FEFU

All right. I'll go dig them up.

(FEFU starts toward the steps. She looks through the doors. She speaks to CHRISTINA.)

You haven't met Phillip. Have you?

CHRISTINA

No.

FEFU

(Looking outside.)

Look. That's him.

(CHRISTINA walks to the door.)

CHRISTINA

Which one?

(FEFU reaches for the gun, aims and shoots. CHRISTINA hides behind the couch. She and CINDY scream.)

FEFU

That one!

(FEFU smiles proudly. She blows on the mouth of the barrel. She puts down the gun and looks out again.)

There he goes. He's up.

CINDY

Christ, Fefu.

FEFU

It's a game we play. I shoot and he falls. Whenever he hears the blast he falls. No matter where he is, he falls. One time he fell in a puddle of mud and his clothes were a mess.

(*She looks out.*)

It's not too bad. He's just dusting off some stuff.

(*She waves to Phillip and starts to go upstairs.*)

He's all right. Look.

(CHRISTINA *looks out. CINDY takes a deep breath.*)

CINDY

A drink?

CHRISTINA

Yes.

(CINDY *goes to the bar.*)

CINDY

What would you like?

CHRISTINA

Bourbon and soda ...

(CINDY *puts ice in a glass, opens a bottle of bourbon and pours it. She reaches for the soda.*)

lots of soda. Just soda.

(CINDY *takes another glass and starts to squirt soda.*)

Wait.

(CINDY *stops squirting.*)

I'll have an ice cube with a few drops of bourbon.

CINDY

One or two ice cubes?

CHRISTINA

One. Something to suck on.

(CINDY *puts one ice cube in another glass, and pours in a few drops of bourbon.*)

CINDY

She's unique. There's no one like her.

CHRISTINA

Thank God.

(CINDY gives the drink to CHRISTINA who is still behind the couch.)

Thanks.

CINDY

But she is lovely you know. She really is.

CHRISTINA

She's crazy.

CINDY

A little. She has a strange marriage.

CHRISTINA

Strange? It's revolting. -What is he like?

CINDY

He's crazy too. They drive each other crazy. They are not crazy really. They drive each other crazy.

CHRISTINA

Go on.

CINDY

I finished.

CHRISTINA

Why do they stay together?

CINDY

They love each other.

CHRISTINA

Love?

CINDY

It's love.

CHRISTINA

Who are the other two men?

CINDY

Fefu's younger brother, John. He's visiting from school. And the gardener. His name is Tom. -The gun is not loaded.

CHRISTINA

How do you know?

CINDY

It's not. Why should it be loaded?

CHRISTINA

Hmm?

CINDY

Why do you think it's loaded?

CHRISTINA

It seemed to be loaded a moment ago.

CINDY

That was just a blank.

CHRISTINA

It sounded like a cannon shot.

CINDY

That was just gun powder. There's no bullet in a blank.

CHRISTINA

The blast alone could kill you. One can die of fright, you know.

CINDY

True.

CHRISTINA

My heart is still beating.

CINDY

That's just fright.

CHRISTINA

Of course it's just fright. It's fright.

CINDY

I mean, you were just scared. You didn't get hurt.

CHRISTINA

just scared. I guess I was lucky I didn't get shot.

CINDY

Fefu won't shoot you. She only shoots Phillip.

CHRISTINA

That's nice of her.

CINDY

You're being a scaredy cat.

CHRISTINA

All right, put the gun away. I don't like looking at it.

(CHRISTINA sits on the chair to the right.)

CINDY

I don't like touching guns.

CHRISTINA

Why not?

CINDY

I never did.

CHRISTINA

It's not loaded.

CINDY

You never know.

CHRISTINA

You're not making sense.

CINDY

I'm not?

CHRISTINA

No. Either you think it's loaded, or you think it's not loaded.

CINDY

I don't see why I can't believe it's not loaded and yet think it might be loaded.

CHRISTINA

Well, you could, but you couldn't be absolutely certain that it's not loaded and think that it might be loaded.

CINDY

I suppose not. I suppose I could only be absolutely certain if I looked. But I wouldn't look because it might go off while I'm looking.

(They laugh.)

CHRISTINA

Oh, I would say that you think there's a good chance it's loaded.

CINDY

No. I wouldn't say that.

CHRISTINA

Shall we look?

CINDY

... No ...

CHRISTINA

Well, put the gun away.

CINDY

You do it.

CHRISTINA

You do it.

CINDY

You do it.

(CHRISTINA walks to the gun and draws the curtain in front of it. She then gestures like a magician after accomplishing a magic feat. FEFU enters and surprises CHRISTINA in the middle of her theatrical gesture. CHRISTINA stops her action.)

FEFU

Oh, don't stop.

CHRISTINA

No. I was ... just ... I ... I'm not a dancer.

FEFU

It looked nice.

(CHRISTINA draws the curtain back. FEFU speaks to CINDY.)

I just fixed the toilet in your bathroom.

CINDY

You did?

FEFU

I did. The water stopper didn't work. It drained. I adjusted it. I'm waiting for the tank to fill up. Make sure it all works.

CHRISTINA

You do your own plumbing?

FEFU

I just had to bend the metal that supports the rubber stopper so it falls right over the hole. What happened was it fell to the side so the water wouldn't stop running into the bowl.

(FEFU sits near CINDY.)

He scared me this time you know. He looked like he was really hurt.

CINDY

I thought the guns were not loaded.

FEFU

I'm never sure.

CHRISTINA

Hmm!

CINDY

Fefu, what do you mean?

FEFU

He told me one day he'll put real bullets in the guns. -He likes to make me nervous. (*There is a moment's silence.*) I have upset you.... I don't mean to upset you. That's the way we are with each other. We always go to extremes but it's not anything to be upset about.

CHRISTINA

You scare me.

FEFU

That's all right. I scare myself too, sometimes. But there's nothing wrong with being scared.... It makes you stronger. -It does me. -He won't put real bullets in the guns. -It suits our relationship ... the game, I mean. If I didn't shoot him with blanks, I might shoot him for real. Do you see the sense of it?

CHRISTINA

I think you're crazy.

FEFU

I'm not. I'm sane.

CHRISTINA

You're very stupid.

FEFU

I'm not. I'm very bright.

CHRISTINA

(*Not hostile.*)

You depress me.

FEFU

Don't be depressed. Laugh at me if you don't agree with me. Say I'm ridiculous. I know I'm ridiculous. Come on, laugh. I hate to think I'm depressing to you.

CHRISTINA

All right. I'll laugh.

FEFU

I'll make you a drink.

CHRISTINA

No, I'm just sucking on the ice.

FEFU

Oh, don't you feel well?

CHRISTINA

No, there was a little bourbon on it.

FEFU

Would you like some more?

CHRISTINA

Yes, I think so. Just a couple of drops.

(FEFU *goes to the bar and pours a little bourbon on the ice cube.*)

FEFU

Like that?

CHRISTINA

Yes, thank you.

(FEFU *gives her the drink and looks at her for a moment.*)

FEFU

That's the cutest thing I've ever seen.

(CHRISTINA *puts the cube to her lips.*)

It's cold.

(CHRISTINA *nods.*)

You need a stick in the ice, like a Popsicle stick. You hold the stick and your fingers won't get cold. I have some sticks. I'll do some for you.

CHRISTINA

Don't.... This is not the way I usually drink my bourbon.

FEFU

It won't be hard to do. You might want some later. -I'm strange, Christina. But I am fortunate in that I don't mind being strange. It's hard on others sometimes. But not that hard. Is it, Cindy. Those who love me, love me precisely because I am the way I am.

(To CINDY.)

Isn't that so?

(CINDY nods and shakes her head.)

CINDY

I would love you even if you weren't the way you are.

FEFU

You wouldn't know it was me if I weren't the way I am.

CINDY

I would still know it was you underneath.

FEFU

(To CHRISTINA)

You see? -There are some good things about me. -I'm never angry for example.

CHRISTINA

But you make everyone else angry.

(FEFU thinks a moment.)

FEFU

No.

CHRISTINA

You've made me furious.

FEFU

I know. And I might make you angry again. Still I would like it if you liked me. -You think it unlikely.

CHRISTINA

I don't know.

FEFU

... We'll see.

(FEFU goes to the doors. She stands there for a moment before she speaks.)

I still like men better than women. -I envy them. I like being like a man. Thinking like a man. Feeling like a man. -They are well together. Women are not.

(CHRISTINA puts her glass to her mouth.)

I'm driving you to alcohol,

(FEFU looks outside. She speaks reflectively.)

Look at them. They are checking the new grass mower ... Out in the fresh air and the sun, while we sit here in the dark ...

Men have natural strength. Women have to find their strength, and when they do find it, it comes forth with bitterness and it's erratic ... Women are restless with each other. They are like live wires ... either chattering to keep themselves from making contact, or else, if they don't chatter, they avert their eyes ... like Orpheus ... as if a god once said "and if they shall recognize each other, the world will be blown apart." They are always eager for the men to arrive. When they do, they can put themselves at rest, tranquilized and in a mild stupor. With the men they feel safe. The danger is gone. That's the closest they can be to feeling wholesome. Men are muscle that cover the raw nerve. They are the insulators. The danger is gone, but the price is the mind and the spirit ... High price. -Why? -What is feared? -Hmm. Well ... -Do you know? Perhaps the heavens would fall. -Have I offended you again?

CHRISTINA

No. I too have wished for that trust men have for each other. The faith the world puts in them and they in turn put in the world. I know I don't have it.

FEFU

Hmm. Well, I have to see how my toilet is doing,

(FEFU goes to the landing and exits. She puts her head out.)

Plumbing is more important than you think.

(CHRISTINA falls of her chair in a mock faint. CINDY smiles.)

CINDY

What do you think?

CHRISTINA

Think? I hurt. I'm all shreds inside.

CINDY

Anything I can do?

CHRISTINA

Sing.

(CINDY sings the first verse of "Winter Wonderland." She does a dance step taking the silk shawl as she moves toward CHRISTINA.)

CHRISTINA

Ohh.

CINDY

You don't like that song?

CHRISTINA

I do. I do.

(CINDY sits on the chair. They sing the second verse of "Winter Wonderland" as they move their legs and fingers in the style of the time. There is the sound of a horn. FEFU enters.)

FEFU

It's Julia.

(They stop singing. To CHRISTINA.)

Are you all right?

CHRISTINA

Yes.

(FEFU exits through the foyer. CHRISTINA sits up.)

CHRISTINA

Darn it. She always catches me.

FEFU

(Off-stage.)

Julia ... let me help you.

JULIA

I can manage. I'm much stronger now.

FEFU

There you go.

JULIA

You have my bag.

FEFU

Yes.

CINDY

I can't get used to it.

CHRISTINA

She's better. Isn't she?

CINDY

Not really.

(JULIA and FEFU enter. JULIA is in a wheelchair.)

JULIA

Hello Cindy.

CINDY

Hello darling. How are you?

JULIA

I'm very well now. I'm driving now. You must see my car. It's very clever the way they worked it all out. You might want to drive it. It's not hard at all.

(*Turning to CHRISTINA.*)

Christina ...

CHRISTINA

Hello Julia.

JULIA

I'm glad to see you.

FEFU

I'll take this to your room. You're down here, if you want to wash up.

(*FEFU exits through the upstage exit. JULIA follows her.*)

CHRISTINA

Was she actually hit by the bullet?

CINDY

No ... I was with her.

CHRISTINA

I know.

CINDY

I thought the bullet hit her, but it didn't ... How do you know if a person is hit by a bullet?

CHRISTINA

Cindy ... there's a wound and ... there's a bullet.

CINDY

Well, the hunter aimed ... at the deer. He shot.

CHRISTINA

He?

CINDY

Yes.

CHRISTINA

(*Pointing in the direction of FEFU.*)

It wasn't ...?

CINDY

Fefu?... No. She wasn't even there. She used to hunt but she doesn't anymore. She loves animals.

CHRISTINA

Go on.

CINDY

He shot. Julia and the deer fell. The deer was dead ... dying. Julia was unconscious. She had convulsions ... like the deer. He died and she didn't. I screamed for help and the hunter came and examined Julia. He said, "She is not hurt." Julia's forehead was bleeding. He said, "It is a surface wound. I didn't hurt her." I know it wasn't he who hurt her. It was someone else. He went for help and Julia started talking. She was delirious. -Apparently there was a spinal nerve injury but the doctors are puzzled because it doesn't seem her spine was hurt when she fell. She hit her head and she suffered a concussion but that would not affect the spinal nerve. So there seems to be no reason for the paralysis. She blanks out and that is caused by the blow on the head. It's a scar in the brain. It's called the petit mal.

(FEFU enters. *She remains by the door.*)

CHRISTINA

What was it she said?

CINDY

Hmm?...

CHRISTINA

When she was delirious.

CINDY

When she was delirious? That she was persecuted. -That they tortured her.... That they had tried her and that the shot was her execution. That she recanted because she wanted to live.... That if she talked about it ... to anyone ... she would be tortured further and killed. And I have not mentioned this before because ... I fear for her.

CHRISTINA

It doesn't make any sense, Cindy.

CINDY

It makes sense to me.

(FEFU goes to CINDY.)

You heard?

(FEFU nods. *She holds CINDY.*)

FEFU

Who hurt her?

CINDY

I don't know.

FEFU

(*To CHRISTINA.*)

Did you know her?

CHRISTINA

I met her once years ago.

FEFU

You remember her then as she was.... She was afraid of nothing.... Have you ever met anyone like that?... She knew so much. She was so young and yet she knew so much.... How did she learn all that?...

(To CINDY.)

Did you ever wonder?

(She ruffles CINDY's hair.)

Well, I still haven't checked my toilet. Can you believe that. I still haven't checked it.

(FEFU goes upstairs.)

CHRISTINA

How long ago was the accident?

CINDY

A year ... a little over a year.

CHRISTINA

Is she in pain?

CINDY

I don't think so.

CHRISTINA

We are made of putty. Aren't we?

(There is the sound of a car, car doors opening and closing. A window opening.)

FEFU

(Off-stage.)

Emma! What is that you're wearing? You look marvelous.

EMMA

(Off-stage.)

I got it in Turkey.

FEFU

Hi Paula, Sue.

PAULA

Hi.

SUE

Hi.

(CINDY goes out to greet them. JULIA enters. She wheels herself to the downstage area.)

FEFU

I'll be right down.

(Short pause.)

Hey, my toilet works.

EMMA

That's marvelous Stephany. Mine does too.

FEFU

Don't be funny.

EMMA

Come down.

(FEFU enters.)

FEFU

They're here.

(She goes to the foyer as EMMA, SUE and PAULA enter. EMMA and FEFU embrace.)

How are you, my child?

EMMA

Good ... good ... good ...

(Still embracing FEFU, EMMA sees JULIA.)

Julia!

(She runs to JULIA and sits on her lap.)

FEFU

Emma!

JULIA

It's all right.

EMMA

Take me for a ride.

(JULIA wheels the chair. EMMA waves as they ride.)

Hi, Cindy, Paula, Sue, Fefu.

JULIA

Do you know Christina?

EMMA

How do you do.

CHRISTINA

How do you do.

EMMA

(*Pointing.*)

Sue ... Paula ...

SUE

Hello.

PAULA

Hello.

CHRISTINA

Hello.

PAULA

(*To FEFU.*)

I liked your talk at Flossie Crit.

FEFU

Oh god, don't remind me. I thought I was awful. Come, I'll show you your rooms.

(*She starts to go up.*)

PAULA

I thought you weren't. I found it very stimulating.

EMMA

When was that?... What was it on?

FEFU

Aviation.

PAULA

It wasn't on aviation. It was on Voltairine de Cleyre.

JULIA

I wish I had known.

FEFU

It wasn't important.

JULIA

I would have gone, Fefu.

FEFU

Really, it wasn't worth the trouble.

EMMA

Now you'll have to tell Julia and me all about Voltairine de Cleyre.

FEFU

You know all about Voltairine de Cleyre.

EMMA

I don't.

FEFU

I'll tell you at lunch.

EMMA

Oh, I had lunch.

JULIA

You can sit and listen while we eat.

EMMA

I will. When do we start our meeting?

FEFU

After lunch. We'll have something to eat and then we'll have our meeting. Who's ready for lunch?

(*The following lines are said almost simultaneously.*)

CINDY

I am.

JULIA

I'm not really hungry.

CHRISTINA

I could eat now.

PAULA

I'm ready.

SUE

I'd rather wait.

EMMA

I'll have coffee.

FEFU

... Well ... We'll take a vote later.

CINDY

What are we doing exactly?

FEFU

About lunch?

CINDY

That too, but I meant the agenda.

(CINDY looks at SUE.)

SUE

Well, I thought we should first discuss what each one of us is going to talk about, so we don't duplicate what someone else is saying, and then we have a review of it, a sort of rehearsal, so we know in what order we should speak and how long it's going to take.

EMMA

We should do a rehearsal in costume. What color should each wear? It matters. Do you know what you're wearing?

PAULA

I haven't thought about it. What color should I wear?

EMMA

Red.

PAULA

Red!

EMMA

Cherry red or white.

SUE

And I?

EMMA

Dark green.

CINDY

The treasurer should wear green.

EMMA

It suits her too. Who else wants to know?

(FEFU raises her hand.)

For you, all the gold in Persia.

FEFU

There is no gold in Persia.

EMMA

In Peru.

FEFU

O'K'

EMMA

I brought my costume. I'll put it on later.

FEFU

You're not in costume?

EMMA

No. This is just a dress. My costume is ... dramatic. I won't tell you any more about it. You'll see it.

SUE

I had no idea we were going to do theatre.

EMMA

Life is theatre. Theatre is life. If we're showing what life is, can be, we must do theatre.

SUE

Will I have to act?

EMMA

It's not acting. It's being. It's springing forth with the powers of the spirit. It's breathing.

JULIA

I'll do a dance.

EMMA

I'll stage a dance for you.

JULIA

Sitting?

EMMA

On a settee.

JULIA

I'm game.

EMMA

It'll be stunning.

(*She throws herself on the couch, kisses whoever is there and takes a deep breath.*)

I'm happy.

(*Walks toward the lawn.*)

Glorious day. Isn't it a beautiful day?... --

(*Going out.*)

Phillip! What are you doing? -Hello. -Hello, John. -What?

FEFU

We'll never see her again. -Come.

(FEFU, PAULA and SUE go upstairs. JULIA goes to the gun, takes it and smells the mouth of the barrel. She looks at CINDY.)

CINDY

It's a blank.

(JULIA takes the remaining slug out of the gun. She lets it fall on the floor.)

JULIA

She's hurting herself.

(JULIA looks blank and is motionless. CINDY picks up the slug. She notices JULIA's condition.)

CINDY

Julia ...

(To CHRISTINA.)

She's absent.

(*She takes the gun from JULIA.*)

CHRISTINA

What do we do?

CINDY

Nothing, she'll be all right in a moment.

(JULIA comes to.)

JULIA

It's blank ...

CINDY

It is.

JULIA

She's hurting herself.

(JULIA lets out a strange whimper. She goes to the coffee table, takes a piece of chocolate, puts it in her mouth and goes toward her room. She stops.)

I must lie down a while.

CINDY

Call me if you need anything.

JULIA

I will.

(She exits. CINDY tries to put the slug in the rifle.)

CINDY

Do you know how to do this?

CHRISTINA

Of course not.

(CINDY succeeds in putting the slug in the gun. CECILIA enters.)

CECILIA

I am Cecilia Johnson. Do I have the right place?

CINDY

Yes.

(Lights fade all around CECILIA. Then they fade on her.)

Act 2

Part II

IN THE LAWN

There is a bench. A game of croquet is set on the grass. FEFU and EMMA eat apples and play croquet.

EMMA

Do you think about genitals all the time?

FEFU

Genitals? No, I don't think about genitals all the time.

EMMA

I do, and it drives me crazy. Each person I see in the street, anywhere at all ... I keep thinking of their genitals; what they

look like, what position they are in. I think it's odd that everyone has them. Don't you?

FEFU

No. I think it'd be odder if they didn't have them.

(*EMMA laughs.*)

EMMA

I mean, people act as if they don't have genitals.

FEFU

How do people with genitals act?

EMMA

I mean, how can business men and women stand in a room and discuss business without even one reference to their genitals. I mean everybody has them. They just pretend they don't.

FEFU

I see. You mean

(*She wiggles her pelvis.*)

they should do this all the time.

(*EMMA laughs.*)

EMMA

No, I don't mean that. Think of it. Don't you think I'm right?

FEFU

Yes, I think you're right.

(*EMMA sits on the bench.*)

Oh, Emma, Emma, Emma, Emma.

EMMA

That's m'name. -Well, you see, it's generally believed that you go to heaven if you are good. If you are bad you go to hell. That is correct. However, in heaven they don't judge goodness the way we think. They don't. They have a divine registry of sexual performance. In that registry they mark down every little sexual activity in your life. If your faith is not entirely in it, if you just perform as an obligation and you don't feel the most profound devotion, if your spirit, your heart and your flesh is not religiously delivered to it, you are condemned. They put you down in the black list and you don't go to heaven. Heaven is populated with divine lovers. And in hell live the duds.

FEFU

That's probably true.

(*EMMA hits the ball.*)

EMMA

I knew you'd see it that way.

FEFU

Oh, I do. I do. You see, on earth we are judged by public acts, and sex is a private act. The partner cannot be said to be the public, since both partners are engaged. So naturally, it stands to reason that it must be angels who judge our sexual life.

EMMA

Naturally.

(Pause.)

FEFU

You always bring joy to me.

EMMA

Thank you.

FEFU

I thank you.

(FEFU becomes distressed. She sits.)

I am in constant pain. I don't want to give in to it. If I do I am afraid I will never recover.... It's not physical, and it's not sorrow. It's very strange Emma. I can't describe it, and it's very frightening.... It is as if normally there is a lubricant ... not in the body ... a spiritual lubricant ... it's hard to describe ... and without it, life is a nightmare, and everything is distorted. -A black cat started coming to my kitchen. He's awfully mangled and big. He is missing an eye and his skin is diseased. At first I was repelled by him, but then, I thought, this is a monster that has been sent to me and I must feed him. And I fed him, One day he came and shat all over my kitchen. Foul diarrhea. He still comes and I still feed him. -I am afraid of him.

(EMMA kisses FEFU.)

How about a little lemonade?

EMMA

Yes.

(FEFU exits. EMMA recites the following sonnet improvising either movement or song.)

EMMA

Not from the stars do I my judgement pluck. And yet methinks I have astronomy; But not to tell of good or evil luck, Of plagues, of dearths, or seasons' quality; Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell, Pointing to each his thunder, rain, and wind, Or say with princes if it shall go well By oft predict that I in heaven find. But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive, And, constant stars, in them I read such art As truth and beauty shall together thrive If from thyself to store thou wouldest convert: Or else of thee this I prognosticate, They end is truth's and beauty's doom and date.

(FEFU enters with a pitcher and two glasses. PAULA and CECILIA follow. When the scene is done a fourth time CINDY and CHRISTINA will also join them. From there they will go to places for the third part in the living room while the audience returns to their seats, except for PAULA who will go to the piano in the living room and sing Schubert's "Who is Sylvia?"

IN THE STUDY

There are books on the walls, a desk, Victorian chairs, a rug on the floor. CHRISTINA sits behind the desk. She reads a French text book. Her lips move but her voice is almost inaudible. CINDY sits to the left of the desk with her feet up on a chair. She looks at a magazine. A few moments pass.

CHRISTINA

(*Practicing.*)

Etes-vous externe ou demi-pensionnaire? La cuisine de votre cantine est-elle bonne, passable ou mauvaise?

(*She continues reading almost inaudibly. A moment passes.*)

CINDY

(*Reading.*)

A lady leopard in Africa divorced her husband because he was a cheetah.

CHRISTINA

Oh, dear.

(*They laugh. They go back to their reading. A moment passes.*)

Est-ce que votre professeur interroge souvent les élèves?

(*They go back to their reading. A moment passes.*)

CINDY

I suppose ... when a person is swept off their feet ... the feet remain and the person goes off ... with the broom.

CHRISTINA

No ... when a person is swept off their feet ... there is no broom.

CINDY

What does the sweeping?

CHRISTINA

An emotion ... a feeling.

CINDY

Then emotions have bristles?

CHRISTINA

Yes.

CINDY

Now I understand.

(*Pause.*)

Do the feet remain?

CHRISTINA

No, the feet fly also ... but separate from the body. At the end of the leap, just before the landing, they join the ankles and one is complete again.

CINDY

Oh, that sounds nice.

CHRISTINA

It is, Being swept off your feet is nice. Anything else?

CINDY

Not for now.

(*They go back to their reading.*)

CHRISTINA

(*Questioning CINDY.*)

Aimez-vous mieux le francais ou l'anglais?

CINDY

... Le francais.

CHRISTINA

Votre pere, et-il militaire, avocat, ou pharmacien?

CINDY

Moi?

CHRISTINA

Non, votre pere.

CINDY

Oui.

CHRISTINA

Vous etes une mauvaise eleve.

CINDY

Oui.

CHRISTINA

Bon.

(*They go back to their reading.*)

CINDY

A lady leopard in Africa divorced her husband because he was a cheetah. Huh huh huh huh.

(CHRISTINA smiles at CINDY.)

Are you having a good time?

CHRISTINA

Yes, I'm very glad I came.

CINDY

Do you like everybody?

CHRISTINA

Yes.

CINDY

Do you like Fefu?

CHRISTINA

I do.... She confuses me a little. -I try to be honest ... and I wonder if she is ... I don't mean that she doesn't tell the truth. I know she does. I mean a kind of integrity. I know she has integrity too.... But I don't know if she's careful with life ... something bigger than the self ... I suppose I don't mean with life but more with convention. I think she is an adventurer in a way. Her mind is adventurous. I don't know if there is dishonesty in that. But in adventure there is taking chances and risks, and then one has to, somehow, have less regard or respect for things as they are. That is, regard for a kind of convention, I suppose. I am probably ultimately a conformist, I think. And I suppose I do hold back for fear of being disrespectful or destroying something -and I admire those who are not. But I also feel they are dangerous to me. I don't think they are dangerous to the world, they are more useful than I am, more important, but I feel some of my life is endangered by their way of thinking. Do you understand?

CINDY

Yes, I do.

CHRISTINA

I guess I am proud and I don't like thinking that I am thoughtful of things that have no value. -I like her.

CINDY

Hmm.

(*They go back to their reading. There is a knock on the door SUE looks in.*)

SUE

Julia is not here?

CINDY

No.

SUE

She must be in her bedroom.

CINDY

Yes, I think she's resting.

(SUE starts to go.)

Come back and join us.

SUE

I will.

CINDY

I had a terrible dream last night.

CHRISTINA

What was it?

CINDY

I was at a dance. And there was a young doctor I had seen in connection with my health. We all danced in a circle and he identified himself and said that he had spoken to Mike about me, but that it was all right, that he had put it so that it was all right. I was puzzled as to why Mike would mind and why he had spoken to him. Then, suddenly everybody sat down on the floor and pretended they were having singing lessons and one person was practicing Italian. The singing professor was being tested by two secret policemen. They were having him correct the voice of someone they had brought. He apparently didn't know how to do it. Then, one of the policemen put his hands on his vocal cords and kicked him out the door. Then he grabbed me and felt my throat from behind with his thumbs while he rubbed my nipples with his pinkies. Then, he pushed me out the door. Then, the young doctor started cursing me. His mouth moved like the mouth of a horse. I was on an upper level with a railing and I said to him, "Stop and listen to me." I said it so strongly that he stopped. Everybody turned to me in admiration because I had made him stop. Then, I said to him, "Restrain yourself." I wanted to say respect me. I wasn't sure whether the words coming out of my mouth were what I wanted to say. I turned to ask my sister. The young man was bending over and trembling in mad rage. Another man told me to run before the young man tried to kill me. Meg and I ran downstairs. She asked me if I wanted to go to her place. We grabbed a taxi, but before the taxi got enough speed he came out and ran to the taxi and was on the verge of opening the door when I woke up.

(*The door opens. FEFU looks in. Her entrance may interrupt CINDY's speech at any point according to how long it takes her to reach the kitchen.*)

FEFU

Who's for a game of croquet?

CHRISTINA

In a little while.

FEFU

See you outside.

(*She exits.*)

CHRISTINA

That was quite a dream.

CINDY

What do you think it means?

CHRISTINA

I think it means you should go to a different doctor.

CINDY

He's not my doctor. I never saw him before.

CHRISTINA

Well good. I'm sure he's not a good doctor.

(At the end of the fourth repeat, when FEFU invites them for croquet, CINDY says, "Let's play croquet," and they follow FEFU.)

IN THE BEDROOM

A plain unpainted room. Perhaps a room that was used for storage and was set up as a sleeping place for JULIA. There is a mattress on the floor. To the right of the mattress there is a small table, to the left is JULIA's wheelchair. There is a sink on the wall. There are dry leaves on the floor although the time is not fall. The sheets are linen. JULIA lies in bed covered to her shoulders. She wears a white hospital gown. JULIA hallucinates. However, her behavior should not be the usual behavior attributed to a mad person. It should be rather still and luminous. There will be aspects of her hallucination that frighten her, but hallucinating itself, does not.

JULIA

They clubbed me. They broke my head. They broke my will. They broke my hands. They tore my eyes out. They took my voice away. They didn't do anything to my heart because I didn't bring my heart with me. They clubbed me again, but my head did not fall off in pieces. That was because they were so good and they felt sorry for me. The judges. You didn't know the judges? -I was good and quiet. I never dropped my smile. I smiled to everyone. If I stopped smiling I would get clubbed because they love me. They say they love me. I go along with that because if I don't...

(With her fingers she indicates her throat being cut and makes the sound that usually accompanies that gesture.)

JULIA

I told them the stinking parts of the body are the important ones: the genitals, the anus, the mouth, the armpit. All important parts except the armpits. And who knows, maybe the armpits are important too. That's what I said. He said that all those parts must be kept clean and put away. He said that women's entrails are heavier than anything on earth and to see a woman running creates a disparate and incongruous image in the mind. It's and-aesthetic. Therefore women should not run. Instead they should strike positions that take into account the weight of their entrails. Only if they do, can they be aesthetic. He said, for example, Goya's Maja. He said Ruben's women are not aesthetic. Flesh. He said that a woman's bottom should be in a cushion, otherwise it's revolting. He said that there are exceptions. Ballet dancers are exceptions. They can run and lift their legs because they have no entrails. Isadora Duncan had entrails, that's why she should not have danced. But she danced and for this reason became crazy. She wasn't crazy.

(She moves her hand as if guarding from a blow.)

JULIA

She was. He said that I had to be punished because I was getting too smart. I'm not smart. I never was. Neither is Fefu smart. They are after her too. Well, she's still walking!

(She guards from a blow. Her eyes closed.)

JULIA

Wait! I'll say my prayer. I'm saying it.

(She mumbles. She opens her eyes with caution.)

JULIA

You don't think I'm going to argue with them do you. I repented. I told them exactly what they wanted to hear. They killed me. I was dead, But I repented and they said, "Live but crippled. And if you tell..."

(She repeats the throat cutting gesture.)

JULIA

Why do you have to kill Fefu, for she's only a joker? "Not kill, cure. Cure her." Will it hurt?

(She whimpers.)

JULIA

Oh, dear, dear, my dear, they want your light. Your light my dear. Your precious light. Oh dear, my dear.

(Her head moves as if slapped.)

JULIA

Not cry. I'll say my prayer. I'll say it. Right now. Look.

(She sits up.)

JULIA

The human being is of the masculine gender. The human being is a boy as a child and grown up he is a man. Everything on earth is for the human being, which is man. To nourish him. -There are evil things on earth for man also. For him to fight with, and conquer and turn its evil into good. So that it too can nourish him. -There are Evil Plants, Evil Animals, Evil Minerals, and Women are Evil. -Woman is not a human being. She is: 1-A mystery. 2-Another species. 3-As yet undefined. 4-Unpredictable; therefore wicked and gentle and evil and good which is evil. -If a man commits an evil act, he must be pitied. The evil comes from outside him, through him and into the act. Woman generates the evil herself. -God gave man no other mate but woman. The oxen is good but it is not a mate for man. The sheep is good but it is not a mate for man. The mate for man is woman and that is the cross man must bear. -Man is not spiritually sexual, he therefore can enjoy sexuality. His sexuality is physical which means his spirit is pure. Women's spirit is sexual That is why after coitus they dwell in nefarious feelings. Because that is their natural habitat. That is why it is difficult for them to return to the human world. Their sexual feelings remain with them till they die. And they take those feelings with them to the afterlife where they corrupt the heavens, and they are sent to hell where through suffering they may shed those feelings and return to earth as man.

(Her head moves as if slapped.)

JULIA

Don't hit me. Didn't I just say my prayer?

(A smaller slap.)

JULIA

I believe it.

(She lies back.)

JULIA

They say when I believe the prayer I will forget the judges. And when I forget the judges I will believe the prayer. They say both happen at once. And all women have done it. Why can't I?

(SUE enters with a bowl of soup on a tray.)

SUE

Julia, are you asleep?

(Short pause.)

JULIA

No.

SUE

I brought your soup.

JULIA

Put it down. I'm getting up in a moment.

(SUE puts the soup down.)

SUE

Do you want me to help you?

JULIA

No, I can manage. Thank you, Sue.

(SUE goes to the door.)

SUE

You're all right?

JULIA

Yes.

SUE

I'll see you later.

JULIA

Thank you, Sue.

(SUE exits. JULIA closes her eyes. As soon as each audience group leaves, the tray is removed, if possible through a back door.)

IN THE KITCHEN

A fully equipped kitchen. There is a table and chairs and a high cutting table. On a counter next to the stove there is a tray with three soup bowls, three spoons and a ladle. On the cutting table there are two empty glasses. Soup is heating on a burner. A kettle with water sits on an unlit burner. In the refrigerator there is an ice tray with wooden sticks in each cube and two pitchers; one with water, one with lemonade. In one of the cabinets there are three complete sets of dishes and other utensils used in the scene. PAULA sits at the table. She is writing on a pad. SUE leans on the cutting table. She is waiting for the soup to heat.

PAULA

I have it all Figured out.

SUE

What?

PAULA

A love affair lasts seven years and three months.

SUE

It does?

PAULA

(*Reading.*)

3 months of love. 1 year saying: It's all right. This is just a passing disturbance. 1 year trying to understand what's wrong. 2 years knowing the end has come. 1 year finding the way to end it. After the separation, 2 years trying to understand what happened. 7 years, 3 months.

(*No longer reading.*)

At any point the sequence might be interrupted by another love affair that has the same sequence. That is, it's not really interrupted, the new love affair relegates the first one to a second plane and both continue their sequence at the same time.

(SUE looks over PAULA's shoulder.)

SUE

You really added it up.

PAULA

Sure.

SUE

What do you want to drink?

PAULA

Water.

(SUE takes the water pitcher from the refrigerator and fills the two glasses.)

The old love affair may fade, so you are not aware the process goes on. A year later it may surface and you might find yourself figuring out what's wrong with the new one while trying to end the old one.

SUE

So how do you solve the problem?

PAULA

Celibacy?

SUE

(*Going to the refrigerator with the pitcher.*)

Celibacy doesn't solve anything.

PAULA

That's true.

SUE

(*Taking out the ice tray with the sticks.*)

What's this?

(PAULA shakes her head.)

Dessert?

(PAULA shrugs her shoulders. SUE takes an ice cube and places it against her forehead.)

For a headache.

(She takes another cube and moves her arms in a judo style.)

Eskimo wrestling.

(She places one stick behind her ear.)

Brain cooler. That's when you're thinking too much. You could use one.

(She tries to put the ice cube behind PAULA' s ear. They wrestle and laugh. She puts the stick in her own mouth. She takes it out to speak.)

This is when you want to keep chaste. No one will kiss you.

(She puts it back in to demonstrate. Then takes it out.)

That's good for celibacy. If you walk around with one of these in your mouth for seven years you can keep all your sequences straight. Finish one before you start the other,

(She puts the ice cube in the tray and looks at it.)

A frozen caterpillar.

(She puts the tray away.)

PAULA

You're leaving that ice cube in there?

SUE

I'm clean.

(She pours soup in three bowls, brings the tray to the table and places a bowl and spoon in front of PAULA.)

So what else do you have on love?

(SUE places another bowl and spoon on the table and sits)

PAULA

Well, the break up takes place in parts. The brain, the heart, the body, mutual things, shared things. The mind leaves but the heart is still there. The heart has left but the body wants to stay. The body leaves but the things are still at the apartment. You must come back. You move everything out of the apartment. You must come back. You move everything out of the apartment but the mind stays behind. Memory lingers in the place. Seven years later, perhaps seven years later, it doesn't matter any more. Perhaps it takes longer. Perhaps it never ends.

SUE

It depends.

PAULA

Yup. It depends.

SUE

Something's bothering you.

PAULA

No.

SUE

(*Taking the tray.*)

I'm going to take this to Julia.

PAULA

Go ahead.

(*As SUE exits, CECILIA enters.*)

CECILIA

May I come in?

PAULA

Yes ... Would you like something to eat?

CECILIA

No, I ate lunch.

PAULA

I didn't eat lunch. I wasn't very hungry.

CECILIA

I know.

PAULA

Would you like some coffee?

CECILIA

I'll have tea.

PAULA

I'll make some.

CECILIA

No, you sit. I'll make it.

(CECILIA looks for tea. PAULA also looks, finds it and gives it to CECILIA.)

PAULA

Here it is.

CECILIA

(*She lights the burner.*)

I've been meaning to call you.

(PAULA walks to the table.)

PAULA

It doesn't matter. I know you're busy.

CECILIA

Still I would have called you but I really didn't find the time.

PAULA

Don't worry.

CECILIA

I wanted to see you again. I want to see you often.

PAULA

There's no hurry. Now we know we can see each other.

CECILIA

Yes, I'm glad we can.

PAULA

I have thought a great deal about my life since I saw you. I have questioned my life. I can't help doing that. It's been many years and I wondered how you see me now.

CECILIA

You're the same.

PAULA

I felt small in your presence ... I haven't done all that I could have. All I wanted to do. Our lives have gone in such different directions I cannot help but review what those years have been for me. I gave up, almost gave up. I have missed you in my life.... I became lazy. I lost the drive. You abandoned me and I kept going. But after a while I didn't know how to. I didn't know how to go on. I knew why when I was with you. To give you pleasure. So we could laugh together. So we could rejoice together. To bring beauty to the world.... Now we look at each other like strangers. We are guarded. I speak and you don't understand my words. Time has changed you more than it has changed me. You have forgotten. I remember every day.

(FEFU enters. Taking two glasses.)

FEFU

Emma and I are having a hell of a game of croquet.

(*Taking the lemonade pitcher from the refrigerator.*)

You want to join us? ... No. You're having a serious conversation.

PAULA

Very serious.

(PAULA smiles at CECILIA in a conciliatory manner.)

Too serious.

FEFU

(As she exits.)

Come.

PAULA

I'm sorry. Let's go play croquet. -I'm not reproaching you.

CECILIA

(Reaching for PAULA's hand.)

I know. I've missed you too.

(They exit. As soon as the audience leaves the props are reset.)

Act 3

Part III

The living room. It is dusk. There are flowers in the bar. EMMA enters, checks the lights in the room on her hand, looks around the room and goes upstairs. The rest enter through the rear. CECILIA, SUE and JULIA are last. CECILIA enters speaking.

CECILIA

Well, we each have our own system of receiving information, placing it, responding to it. That system can function with such a bias that it could take any situation and translate it into one formula. That is, I think, the main reason for stupidity or even madness, not being able to tell the difference between things.

SUE

Like?

CECILIA

Like ... this person is screaming at me. He's a bully. I don't like being screamed at. Another person screams, or the same person in a different situation is screaming and they have a good reason. You know you have done something that justly provokes them to scream. They are two different things. Often that distinction is not made.

SUE

I see.

CECILIA

We cannot survive in a vacuum. We must be part of a community, perhaps 10, 100, 1000. It depends on how strong you are. But even the strongest will need a dozen, three, even one who sees, thinks and feels as they do. The greater the need for that kind of reassurance, the greater the number that we need to identify with. Some need to identify with the whole nation. Then, the greater the number, the more limited the number of responses and thoughts. A common denominator must be reached. Thoughts, emotions that fit all, have to be limited to a small number. That is, I feel, the concern of the educator -to teach how to be sensitive to the differences, in ourselves as well as outside ourselves, not to supervise the memorization of facts.

(EMMA's head appears in the doorway to the stairs.)

Otherwise the unusual in us will perish. As we grow we feel we are strange and fear any thought that is not shared with everyone.

JULIA

As I feel I am perishing. My hallucinations are madness, of course, but I wish I could be with others who hallucinate also. I would still know I am mad but I would not feel so isolated. -Hallucinations are real, you know. They are not like dreams. They are as real as all of you here. I have actually asked to be hospitalized so I could be with other nuts. But the doctors don't want to. They can't diagnose me. That makes me even more isolated.

(*There is a moment's silence.*)

You see, right now, it's an awful moment because you don't know what to say or do. If I were with other people who hallucinate they would say, "Oh yeah. Sure. It's awful. Those dummies, they don't see anything."

(*The others begin to relax.*)

It's not so bad, really. I can laugh at it ... Emma is ready. We should start.

(*The others are hesitant. She speaks to FEFU.*)

Come on.

FEFU

Sure.

(FEFU begins to move the table. Others help move the table and enough furniture to clear a space in the center. They form a semi-circle facing upstage.)

All right. I start. Right?

CINDY

Right.

(EMMA sits on the steps. Only her head and legs are visible.)

FEFU

I talk about the stifling conditions of primary school education etc' ... etc' ... The project ... I know what I'm going to say but I don't want to bore you with it. We all know it by heart. Blah blah blah. And so on and so on. And so on and so on. Then I introduce Emma ... And now Miss Emma Blake.

(*They applaud. EMMA shakes her head.*)

What.

EMMA

Paula goes next.

FEFU

Does it matter?

EMMA

Of course it matters. Dra-ma-tur-gia. It has to build. I'm in costume.

FEFU

Oh. And now, ladies and gentlemen, Miss Paula Cori will speak on Art as a Tool for Learning. And I tell them the work you have done at the Institute, community centers, essays, etc' Miss Paula Cori.

(*They applaud. PAULA goes to center.*)

PAULA

Ladies and gentlemen, I, like my fellow educator and colleague, Stephany Beckmann ...

FEFU

I am not an educator.

PAULA

What are you?

FEFU

... a do gooder ... a girl scout.

PAULA

Well, like my fellow girl scout Stephany Beckmann say blah blah blah blah blah and I offer the jewels of my wisdom and experience, which I will write down and memorize, otherwise I would just stand there and stammer and go blank. And even after I memorize it I'm sure I will just stand there and stammer and go blank.

EMMA

I'll work with you on it.

PAULA

However, after our other colleague Miss Emma Blake works with me on it ...

(*In imitation of EMMA she brings her hands together and opens her arms as she moves her head back and speaks.*)

My impulses will burst forth through a symphony of eloquence.

EMMA

Breathe ... in ...

(PAULA *inhales slowly.*)

And bow.

(PAULA bows. *They applaud. She comes up from the bow.*)

PAULA

Oh, I liked that.

(*The walk to her seat has the same quality as the previous movements. She sits.*)

EMMA

Good ...

(*They applaud.*)

FEFU

And now, ladies and gentlemen, the one and only, the incomparable, our precious, dear Emma Blake.

(EMMA walks in rather casually. She wears a robe which hangs from her arms to the floor. She demonstrates the possibilities of the robe.)

EMMA

From the prologue to "The Science of Educational Dramatics" by Emma Sheridan Fry. ^{*} Environment knocks at the gateway of the senses. A rain of summons beats upon us day and night.... We do not answer. Everything around us shouts against our deafness, struggles with our unwillingness, batters our walls, flashes into our blindness, strives to sieve through us at every pore, begging, fighting, insisting. It shouts, "Where are you? Where are you?" But we are deaf. The signals do not reach us.

Society restricts us, school straight jackets us, civilization submerges us, privation wrings us, luxury feather-beds us. The Divine Urge is checked. The Winged Horse balks on the road, and we, discouraged, defeated, dismount and burrow into ourselves. The gates are closed and Divine Urge is imprisoned at Center. Thus we are taken by indifference that is death.

Environment finding the gates closed tries to break in. Turned away, it comes another way. Keep back, it stretches its hands to us. Always scheming to reach us. Never was a suitor more insistent than Environment, seeking admission, claiming recognition, signaling to be seen, shouting to be heard. And through the ages we sit inside ourselves deaf, dumb and blind, and will not stir....

... Maybe you are not deaf.... Perhaps signals reach you. Maybe you stir.... The gates give.... Eternal Urge pushes through the stupor of our senses, making paths to meet the challenging suitor, windows through which to see him, ears through which to hear him. Environment shouting, "Where are you?" and Center battering at the inner side of the wall crying, "Here I am," and dragging down bars, wrenching gates, prying at port-holes. Listening at cracks, reaching everywhere, and demanding that sense gates be flung open. The gates are open! Eternal Urge stands at the threshold signaling with venturous flag. An imperious instinct lets us know that "all" is ours, land that whatever anyone has ever known, or may ever have known, we will call and claim. A sense of life universal surges through our life individual. We attack the feast of this table with an insatiable appetite that cries for all.

What are we? A creation of God's consciousness coming now slowly and painfully into recognition of ourselves.

What is Personality? A small part of us. The whole of us is behind that hungry rush at the gates of Senses.

What is Civilization? A circumscribed order in which the whole has not entered.

What is Environment? Our mate, our true mate that clamors for our reunion.

We will meet him. We will seize all, learn all, know all here, that we may fare further on the great quest! The task of Now is only a step toward the task of the Whole! Let us then seek the laws governing real life forces, that coming into their own, they may create, develop and reconstruct. Let us awaken life dormant! Let us, boldly, seizing the star of our intent, left it as the lantern of our necessity, and let it shine over the darkness of our compliance. Come! The light shines. Come! It brightens our way. Come! Don't let its glorious light pass you by! Come! The day has come!

(EMMA throws herself on the couch. PAULA embraces her.)

Oh, it's so beautiful!.

JULIA

It is, Emma. It is.

(They applaud.)

CINDY

Encore! Encore!

(EMMA stands. PAULA sits on the couch.)

EMMA

Environment knocks at the gateway ...

(She laughs and joins the others in the semi-circle.)

What's next.

FEFU

I introduce Cecilia.

(She goes to center.)

I don't think I should introduce Cecilia. She should just come out after Emma. Now things don't need introduction.

(Imitating EMMA)

They are happening.

EMMA

Right!

(CECILIA goes to center.)

CECILIA

Well, as we say in the business, that's a very hard act to follow.

EMMA

Not very hard. It's a hard act to follow.

CECILIA

Right. I should say my name first.

FEFU

Yes.

CECILIA

I should breathe too.

(She takes a breath. One starts singing "Cecilia." All except PAULA join in. CECILIA sits next to PAULA. She leans against PAULA and puts her hand on PAULA's leg. At the end of the song CECILIA realizes where she is and stands.)

I should go before Emma. I don't think anyone should speak after Emma.

CINDY

Right. It should be Fefu, Paula, Cecilia, then Emma, and then Sue explaining the finances and asking for pledges. And the money should roll in. It's very good.

(They applaud.)

Sue ...

(SUE goes to center.)

SUE

Yes, blahblahblahblah, pledges and money.

(She indicates she is finished. They applaud.)

FEFU

Who's ready for coffee?

CINDY

And dishes.

CHRISTINA

I'll help.

EMMA

Me too.

(They put the furniture back. EMMA and SUE start to go to the kitchen. SUE tries to go ahead of EMMA. EMMA speeds ahead of her.)

FEFU

Don't all come. Sit. Sit. You have done enough, relax.

(All except CINDY and JULIA exit.)

JULIA

I should go do the dishes. I haven't done anything.

CINDY

You can do them tomorrow.

JULIA

True. -So how have you been?

CINDY

Hmm.

JULIA

Let me see. I can tell by looking at your face. Not so bad.

CINDY

Not so bad.

(There is the sound of laughter from the kitchen. CHRISTINA runs in.)

CHRISTINA

They're having a water fight over who's going to do the dishes.

(She hides behind the left curtain.)

CINDY

Emma?

CHRISTINA

And Paula, and Sue, all of them. Fefu Was getting into it when I left. Cecilia got out the back door.

(CHRISTINA walks back to the kitchen with some caution. She runs back and lies on the couch covering her head with a cushion. EMMA enters with a pan of water in her hand. She is wet. CINDY and JULIA point to the lawn. EMMA runs to the lawn. There is the sound of knocking from upstairs.)

PAULA

Open up.

FEFU

There's no one here.

PAULA

Open up you coward.

FEFU

I can't. I'm busy.

PAULA

What are you doing?

FEFU

I have a man here. Ah ah ah ah ah.

PAULA

O'K I'll wait. Take your time.

FEFU

It's going to take quite a while.

PAULA

It's all right. I'll wait.

FEFU

Do me a favor?

PAULA

Sure. Open up and I'll do you a favor.

(There is the sound of a pot falling, a door slamming.)

FEFU

Fill it up for me.

PAULA

O'K'

FEFU

Thank you.

PAULA

Here's water. Open up.

FEFU

Leave it there. I'll come out in a minute.

PAULA

O'K' Here it is. I'm leaving now.

(*Loud steps. PAULA comes down with a filled pan. She hides by the entrance to the steps. She waits a moment, realizes FEFU is not coming down. She comes down from the landing. She walks to the rear exit, screams and runs to the lawn. EMMA follows her. Water splashes.*)

EMMA

You missed!

PAULA

Truce!

EMMA

Who's the winner?

PAULA

You are. You do the dishes.

EMMA

I'm the winner. You do the dishes.

(*SUE comes down the steps and looks out the window.*)

SUE

Psst.

(*PAULA and EMMA scream.*)

Gotcha!

EMMA

Please don't.

PAULA

Truce. Truce.

SUE

O'K Back to the kitchen. Empty that pan.... Right there! Back to the kitchen.

(PAULA and EMMA come in with empty pans. SUE steps down from the landing. PAULA tries to run.)

Halt!

(PAULA stops.)

To the kitchen.

(They go to the kitchen. A moment later they scream.)

FEFU

(Off-stage.)

O'K Line up.

(To SUE.)

Put that down.

(There is a moment's silence.)

JULIA

It's over.

CINDY

We're safe.

JULIA

(To CHRISTINA.)

You can come up now.

(CHRISTINA stays down.)

You rather wait a while.

(CHRISTINA nods.)

CHRISTINA

(Playful.)

I feel danger lurking.

CINDY

She's been hiding all day.

(FEFU enters and sits.)

FEFU

I won. I got them working in there.

JULIA

I thought the fight was over who'd do the dishes.

FEFU

Yes. -I have to change. I'm soaked.

(Starting to go.)

CHRISTINA

They forgot what the fight was about.

FEFU

We did?

JULIA

That's usually the way it is.

FEFU

(To CHRISTINA)

Are you ready for an ice cube?

(FEFU exits upstairs. EMMA tip-toes in. She signals CINDY and JULIA to be silent. She reaches the couch, pours water on CHRISTINA and runs back to the kitchen. CHRISTINA runs upstairs. There is silence.)

CINDY

So. -And how have you been?

JULIA

All right. I've been taking care of myself.

CINDY

You look well.

JULIA

I do not ... Have you seen Mike?

CINDY

No, not since Christmas.

JULIA

I'm sorry.

CINDY

I'm O'K -And how's your love life?

JULIA

Far away.... I have no need for it.

CINDY

I'm sorry.

JULIA

Don't be. I'm very morbid these days. I think of death all the time.

PAULA

(*Standing in the doorway.*)

Anyone for coffee?

(*They raise their hands.*)

Anyone take milk?

(*They raise their hands.*)

JULIA

Should we go in?

PAULA

I'll bring it out.

(PAULA exits.)

JULIA

I feel we are constantly threatened by death, every second, every instant, it's there. And every moment something rescues us. Something rescues us from death every moment of our lives. For every moment we live we have to thank something. We have to be grateful to something that fights for us and saves us. I have felt lifeless and in the face of death. Death is not anything. It's being lifeless and I have felt lifeless sometimes for a brief moment, but I have been rescued by these ... guardians. I am not sure who these guardians are. I only know they exist because I have felt their absence. I think we have come to know them as life, and we have become familiar with certain forms they take. Our sight is a form they take. That is why we take pleasure in seeing things, and we find some things beautiful. The sun is a guardian. Those things we take pleasure in are usually guardians. We enjoy looking at the sunlight when it comes through the window. Don't we? We as people, are guardians to each other when we give love. And then of course we have white cells and antibodies protecting us. Those moments when I feel lifeless have occurred, and I am afraid one day the guardians won't come in time and I will be defenseless. I will die ... for no apparent reason.

(*Pause. PAULA stands in the doorway with a bottle of milk.*)

PAULA

Anyone take rotten milk?

(*She smiles, No one laughs.*)

I'm kidding. This one is no good but there's more in there ...

(*Remaining in good spirits.*)

Forget it. It's not a good joke.

JULIA

It's good.

PAULA

In there it seemed funny but here it isn't. It's a kitchen joke.

(PAULA shrugs her shoulders.)

... Bye ...

(She exits.)

JULIA

(After her.)

It is funny, Paula.

(To CINDY.)

It was funny.

CINDY

It's all right, Paula doesn't mind.

JULIA

I'm sure she minds. I'll go see ...

(JULIA starts to go. PAULA appears in the doorway.)

PAULA

Hey, who was the lady I saw you with? -That was no lady. That was my rotten wife. That one wasn't good either, was it?

(Exiting.)

Emma.... That one was no good either.

(SUE comes in with a tray with sugar, milk and two cups of coffee. She stops at the doorway to look at PAULA and EMMA who are behind the wall.)

SUE

(Whispering.)

What are you doing? -What? -O'K, O'K

(She comes in and puts the tray down. She whispers.)

They're plotting something.

(PAULA comes out.)

PAULA

Ladies and gentlemen. Ladies, since our material is too shocking and avant-garde, we have decided to uplift our subject matter so it's more palatable to the sensitive public.

(PAULA takes a pose. EMMA comes out. She lifts an imaginary camera to her face.)

EMMA

Say cheese.

PAULA

Cheese

(PAULA smiles. They both turn front.)

PAULA and EMMA

Ha ha!

(The others smile.)

PAULA

Ah, success, success. Make it clean and you'll succeed. -Coffee's in the kitchen.

SUE

I brought theirs out.

PAULA

Oh, shall we have it here?

JULIA

No. We can all go in the kitchen.

(They each take their coffee and go toward the kitchen.)

PAULA

Either here or there.

(She sits by the rear door.)

I'm exhausted.

(CECILIA enters from the lawn. She looks at PAULA for a moment before PAULA notices her.)

CECILIA

Is the war over?

PAULA

Yes.

CECILIA

It's nice out,

(PAULA nods in agreement.)

Where's everybody?

PAULA

In the kitchen, having coffee.

(CECILIA walks toward the kitchen. She speaks when she reaches the archway.)

CECILIA

We must talk.

(PAULA is ready to talk.)

Not now. I'll call you.

(CECILIA starts to go.)

PAULA

When?

CECILIA

I don't know. I have to ...

PAULA

I don't want you, you know.

CECILIA

I know.

PAULA

No, you don't. I'm not lustng after you.

CECILIA

I know that.

(She starts to go.)

I'll call you.

PAULA

When?

CECILIA

As soon as I can.

PAULA

At what time?

CECILIA

... I don't know.

PAULA

I won't be home then.

CECILIA

When will you be home?

PAULA

I'll check my book and let you know.

CECILIA

Do that. -I'll be leaving after coffee. I'll say good-bye now.

PAULA

Good-bye.

(CECILIA exits. PAULA starts toward the steps. FEFU appears on the landing.)

FEFU

You're still wet.

PAULA

I'm going to change now.

FEFU

Do you need anything?

PAULA

No. I have something I can change to. Thank you.

(PAULA goes upstairs. FEFU takes a step down and stops. There is a slight change of atmosphere. She is downcast. She turns to see the flowers on the bar and goes to them. She smells one and turns to look behind her. JULIA enters. She is walking. She goes to the coffee table, gets the sugar bowl, lifts it in FEFU's direction, takes the cover off, puts it back on and walks to the kitchen. As soon as JULIA exits, SUE's voice is heard speaking the following lines. Immediately after, JULIA re-enters wheeled by SUE. CINDY, CHRISTINA, EMMA, and CECILIA are with them. On the arms of the wheelchair rests a tray with a coffee pot and cups. As they reach the sofa and chairs they sit and take cups.)

SUE

I was terribly exhausted and run down. I lived on coffee so I could stay up all night and do my work. And they used to give us these medical check-ups all the time. But all they did was ask how we felt and we'd say "Fine," and they'd check us out. In the meantime I looked like a ghost. I was all bones. Remember Susan Austin? She was very naive and when they asked her how she felt, she said she was nervous and she wasn't sleeping well. So she had to see a psychiatrist from then on.

EMMA

Well, she was crazy.

SUE

No, she wasn't. -Oh god, those were awful days.... Remember Julie Brooks?

EMMA

Sure.

SUE

She was a beautiful girl.

EMMA

Ah yes, she was gorgeous.

(PAULA comes down as soon as possible and stands on the landing.)

SUE

At the end of the first semester they called her in because she had been out with 28 men and they thought that was awful. And the worst thing was that after that, she thought there was something wrong with her.

CINDY

She was a nymphomaniac, that's all.

(They are amused.)

SUE

She was not. She was just very beautiful so all the boys wanted to go out with her. And if a boy asked her to go have a cup of coffee she'd sign out and write in the name of the boy. None of us did of course. All she did was go for coffee or go to a movie. She was really very innocent.

EMMA

And Gloria Schuman? She wrote a psychology paper the faculty decided she didn't write and they called her in to try to make her admit she hadn't written it. She insisted she wrote it and they sent her to a psychiatrist also.

JULIA

Everybody ended going to the psychiatrist.

(FEFU exits through the foyer.)

EMMA

After a few visits the psychiatrist said: Don't you think you know me well enough now that you can tell me the truth about the paper? He almost drove her crazy. They just couldn't believe she was so smart.

SUE

Those were difficult times.

PAULA

We were young. That's why it was difficult. On my first year I thought you were all very happy.

EMMA

Oh god.

PAULA

I had been so deprived in my childhood that I believed the rich were all happy. During the summer you spent your vacations in Europe or the Orient. I went to, work and I resented that. But then I realized that many lives are ruined by poverty and many lives are ruined by wealth. I was always able to manage. And I think I enjoyed myself as much when I went to Revere Beach on my day off as you did when you visited the Taj Mahal. Then when I stopped feeling envy, I started noticing the waste. I began feeling contempt for those who, having everything a person can ask for, make such a mess of it. I resented them because they were not better than the poor. If you have all you need you should be generous. If you can afford to go to

school your mind should be better. If you didn't have to fight for your place on earth you should be nobler. But I saw them cheating and grabbing like the kids in the slums, or wasting away with self-indulgence. And I saw them be plain stupid. If there is a reason why some are rich while others starve it must be so they put everything they have at the service of others. They should take the responsibility of everything that happens in the world. They are the only ones who can influence things. The poor don't have the power to change things. I think we should teach the poor and let the rich take care of themselves. I'm sorry, I know that's what we're doing. That's what Emma has been doing. I'm sorry ... I guess I feel it's not enough.

(PAULA *sobs*.)

I'll wash my face. I'll be right back.

(*She starts to go*.)

I think highly of all of you.

(*She goes through the rear doorway. SUE starts to go after her. CECILIA follows SUE. PAULA turns. SUE walks back. CECILIA kisses PAULA on the lips. They exit. FEFU enters from the lawn.*)

FEFU

Have you been out? The sky is full of stars.

(SUE, CHRISTINA, and CINDY *exit*.)

JULIA

What's the matter?

(FEFU *smiles and shakes her head*. JULIA *starts to go toward the door*.)

FEFU

Stay a moment, will you?

JULIA

Of course.

FEFU

Did you have enough coffee?

JULIA

Yes.

FEFU

Did you find the sugar?

JULIA

Yes. There was sugar in the kitchen. What's the matter?

FEFU

Can you walk?

(JULIA *is hurt. She opens her arms implying she hides nothing*.)

I am sorry, my dear.

JULIA

What is the matter?

FEFU

I don't know, Julia. Every breath is painful for me. I don't know.

(FEFU turns JULIA's head to look into her eyes.)

I think you know.

(JULIA looks away.)

JULIA

No, I don't know. I haven't seen very much of you lately. I have thought of you a great deal. I always think of you. Cindy tells me how you are. I always ask her. How is Phillip? Things are not well with Phillip?

FEFU

No.

JULIA

What's wrong?

FEFU

A lot is wrong.

JULIA

He loves you.

FEFU

He can't stand me.

FEFU

He loves you.

FEFU

He's left me. His body is here but the rest is gone. I exhaust him. I torment him and I torment myself. I need him, Julia.

JULIA

I know you do.

FEFU

I need his touch. I need his kiss. I need the person he is. I can't give him up.

(She looks into JULIA's eyes,)

I look into your eyes and I know what you see.

(JULIA closes her eyes.)

It's death.

(JULIA *shakes her head.*)

Fight!

JULIA

I can't.

FEFU

I saw you walking.

JULIA

No. I can't walk.

FEFU

You came for sugar, Julia. You came for sugar. Walk!

JULIA

You know I can't walk.

FEFU

Why not? -Try! -Get up! -Stand up!

JULIA

What is wrong with you?

FEFU

You have given up!

JULIA

I get tired! I get exhausted! I am exhausted!

FEFU

What is it you see?

(JULIA *doesn't answer.*)

What is it you see! Where is it you go that tires you so?

JULIA

I can't spend time with others! I get tired!

FEFU

What is it you see!

JULIA

You want to see it too?

FEFU

No, I don't. You're nuts, and willingly so.

JULIA

You know I'm not.

FEFU

And you're contagious. I'm going mad too.

JULIA

I try to keep away from you.

FEFU

Why?

JULIA

I might be harmful to you.

FEFU

Why?

JULIA

I am contagious. I can't be what I used to be.

FEFU

You have no courage.

JULIA

You're being cruel.

FEFU

I try to swallow my feelings but I can't. They choke me. I want to rest, Julia. How does a person rest. I want to put my mind at rest. I am frightened.

(JULIA looks at FEFU.)

Don't look at me.

(She covers JULIA's eyes with her hand.)

I lose my courage when you look at me.

JULIA

May no harm come to your head.

FEFU

Fight!

JULIA

May no harm come to your will.

FEFU

Fight, Julia!

JULIA

I have no life left.

FEFU

Fight, Julia!

JULIA

May no harm come to your hands.

FEFU

I need you to fight.

JULIA

May no harm come to your eyes.

FEFU

Fight with me!

JULIA

May no harm come to your voice.

FEFU

Fight with me!

JULIA

May no harm come to your heart.

(CHRISTINA enters. FEFU sees CHRISTINA, releases JULIA. To CHRISTINA.)

FEFU

Now I have done it. Haven't I. You think I'm a monster.

(To JULIA.)

Forgive me if you can.

(JULIA nods.)

JULIA

I forgive you.

(FEFU gets the gun.)

CHRISTINA

What in the world are you doing with that gun?

FEFU

I'm going to clean it.

CHRISTINA

I think you better not.

FEFU

I think you're silly.

(CECILIA appears on the landing. She is ready to go.)

CHRISTINA

I don't care if you shoot yourself. I just don't like the mess you're making.

(FEFU starts to go to the lawn and turns.)

FEFU

I enjoy betting it won't be a real bullet. You want to bet?

CHRISTINA

No.

(FEFU exits. CHRISTINA goes to JULIA.)

Are you all right?

JULIA

Yes.

CHRISTINA

Can I get you anything?

JULIA

Water.

(CECILIA goes to the bar for water.)

Put some sugar in it. Could I have a damp cloth for my forehead?

(CHRISTINA goes toward the kitchen.)

I didn't tell her anything. Did I? I didn't.

CECILIA

About what?

JULIA

She knew.

(There is the sound of a shot. CHRISTINA and CECILIA run out. JULIA puts her hand to her forehead. Her hand goes down slowly. There is blood on her forehead. Her head falls back. FEFU enters holding a dead rabbit in her arms. She

stands behind JULIA.)

FEFU

I killed it ... I just shot ... and killed it ... Julia.

(SUE and CINDY enter from the foyer, EMMA from the backstage entrance, PAULA from upstairs, CHRISTINA and CECILIA from the lawn. They surround JULIA. The lights fade.)

*Emma Sheridan Fry taught acting to children at The Educational Alliance in New York from 1903 to 1909. In 1917, her book *Educational Dramatics* was published by Lloyd Adams Noble. The text of Emma's speech is taken from the prologue.